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ABSTRACT

Reflecting the author's involvement as a consulting sociologist to various social change agencies in Canada, this paper outlines several issues and research needs. These concern the position and role of community development workers, field staff administration, the enlistment of citizen support for social change, and the lag between program planning and implementation. Five references are included. [Document not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (LY)

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# SOME CURRENT CONCERNS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

# AN AGENDA FOR RESEARCH AND REVIEW *

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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## Introduction

This paper outlines some issues which strike me as important from the vantage point of one working with a variety of social action agencies - federal, provincial and regional. You, as a participant, are invited to add your own current conerns about the field as a point of departure for an exchange of ideas at the 1969 National Workshop on Community Development.

## The Position and Role of the C.D. Worker

Interview a dozen teachers, nurses or other professionals and you will become aware of some similarities in education, skills and personality. BUT, interview a dozen C.D. workers and you will probably find no two alike - what does this mean? Perhaps the field is still in a pre-professional state where there is yet no consensus on the function to be performed and thus no possibility of its personnel sharing some core characteristics, but should it continue this way?

Many writers have presented their ideas on the nature of the work and the kind of people needed to foster it, but there is little evidence that any of these formulations have been systematically implemented in Canada. Is it time to collect information from both administrators and fieldstaff so that we can derive a comparative view of the field in a variety of Canadian settings? From this might be obtained a delineation of the personality, skills and knowledge required for the main kinds of agencies as a guide to their selection, training, supervision, and evaluation of C.D. staff.

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The research design for such a study may readily be adapted from job analysis and job specification in industrial psychology. Some work in industrial sociology of roles which bridge the gap between management and the worker (e.g. studies of foreman) may also be relevant sources of research models.

Developmental Administration

Similar diversity seems to exist in the administration of C.D. fieldstaff. Some agencies have an open style which reflects the way they encourage their staff to act in the field; others evidence no such consistency, using traditional line-type management in a kind of benevolent dictatorship. While many administrators prescribe training for others, most are reluctant to question their own familiar patterns of thought and action.

Yet if regional development is to occur, there must be changes in the structure and style of government operations, as Philbrook has pointed out recently.[1] Classical bureaucracy appears to place too much emphasis on those within it to respond to the internal requirements of the system rather than to meet the needs of external clients to whom developmental services should be delivered. As a result, professionally oriented civil servants are under pressure either to serve the system at the expense of ignoring the needs of the disadvantaged, or to respond to the plight of the poor at the expense of their own jobs or prospects for promotion.

There are, of course, alternative models and styles for large scale organisations, as seen in some dynamic business firms and research and development operations. Acquaintance with a social action agency (government or otherwise) often conveys the impression that the blocks to its effectiveness

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[1] Philbrook, T., "Regional Development and Governmental Change", paper given to the Seminar on Regional Government, Toronto, February 23, 1968.

are much more in its administration than in its fieldstaff. In this case, there is no justification for training fieldstaff to work developmentally if there is little prospect that they will get consistent administrative support to act in this manner. A training sequence in developmental administration is therefore being devised for administrators of programs and agencies focused on social change.[2]

The ideas and experience of other participants on this subject is warmly solicited.

Fostering Citizen Stimuli

Because of some of the problems experienced by government agencies in implementing community development, it is useful not only to improve their structure and operating methods but also to bolster their non-traditional behaviour with citizen support. Specifically, this can be expressed in fostering counter forces to the pressures within establishments for stability.

For example, if the members of a developmental government agency (director, supervisors and fieldstaff) come under pressure to slow down or engage in less meaningful activities, they usually find themselves in a poor bargaining position. (The target populations, or ultimate clients, are often too poorly organized to speak up for the programs which have just begun to benefit them). Frequently, the director and his staff must choose between capitulating and settling for half-measures, or resigning, or finding their operation radically re-organized so it is no longer a threat to the establishment. What can be done about this?

One alternative is to foster small ginger groups composed of sec re and

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2 Connor, D.M., "Stimulating Rural Development in Canada: A Case Study", Developmental Services Unit, Rural Development Branch, Dept. of Forestry and Rural Development, Ottawa, Sept. 1968, pp. 16-17.

innovative individuals who can meet several times a year, examine the nature and pace of development in their area and foster it in a variety of ways. These might range from meeting with a Minister to discuss a matter of concern, to contributing a series of constructive alternative suggestions to the head of an action agency or an informative appeal to the public to express itself on an issue. Some partial examples of these groups already exist nationally and provincially.

Another way, employed in several African countries recently under French auspices[3], involves the establishment of small training centres at which unpaid local leaders (selected by village councils) are oriented to the possibilities of development for three weeks before returning home. Subsequent visits of the director of the training centre to the communities and return visits of the participants to the centre for additional learning opportunities foster continuity and flexibility. As a result, according to oral reports at the Second World Congress in Rural Sociology held in Holland last summer, initiatives arise from the people to the staff of existing (traditional line-type) agencies and stimulate them to action. Unaccustomed to such initiatives, administrators and fieldstaff become open to opportunities to learn developmental ways of working with the local people[4].

What is the viability of this concept for disadvantaged areas of Canada? The budget and personnel required to operate one or two centres for action-research purposes are minimal. But how could the dynamic director be insulated from establishment pressures?

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[3] Goussault, Y., "The Implanting of 'Animation' Cells in Francophone Black Africa", Community Development Journal, Vol. 3 #3, July 1968, pp.122-127

[4] Note that this is not a parallel with the use of indigenous non-professionals employed by a social action agency.

Is this a practical means to engender the kind of citizen participation to which many pay lip-service but which seems almost impossible to implement directly through a government agency? What other ways can you suggest to improve the effectiveness of government and non-government organizations to foster the development of people and their resources?

Planners and Operators

As regional planning and special funding to implement it becomes more widespread across Canada[5], discontinuities between those who create the plans and those who subsequently attempt to operationalize them become apparent. For example, economists typically recognize the importance of socio-cultural factors in regional development, but lack training and experience in actually working with disadvantaged people and their different value patterns etc.

As a result, economic factors tend to be treated in detail in regional plans, but social factors in rather less concrete terms. Further, there is usually little involvement of local people in the formulation of such plans, even in testing the acceptability of plan alternatives. When planning takes place in such a social vacuum, the results are likely to require substantial adjustments in the following operational phase. In addition, there is likely to be a considerable hiatus between the signing of an agreement to implement a regional plan and the attainment of momentum in implementing it.

How can this problem be overcome? How ensure that socio-cultural factors are included in regional planning in a continuous process through which the ultimate clients become meaningful participants in an unbroken sequence from preliminary research through planning to implementation?

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5 Poetschke, L.E., "Regional Planning for Depressed Rural Areas: the Canadian Experience", Canadian Journal of Agricultural Economics, Vol.16 #1 (Feb.1968) pp. 8-20.

An Invitation

This is not a conclusion but an invitation to add your current concerns in the field of community development so that an agenda of key topics for review, research and action will result from our sessions.

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